

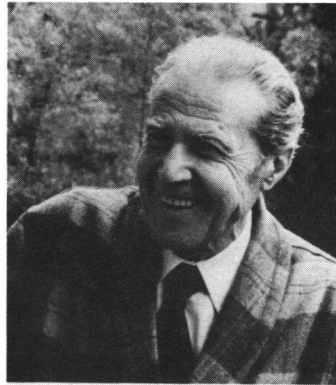
CESARE NIELSEN

With a considerable and most unfortunate delay, we are bringing under the attention of the odonatological community that on July 11, 1984, Dr Cesare Nielsen, aged 86, passed away in Bologna, Italy.

He was born in Bologna on May 24, 1898, from a Danish family that came to Italy towards the end of the last century. At the onset of World War I he went to Switzerland, where he attended Medicine studies at the Universities of Bern and Genève, and, in 1922, took his university degree as a dentist. After returning to Bologna, he also obtained a degree in "Medicina e Chirurgia", in 1925, in order to practise his profession in Italy. Severe diseases of his left ilium, followed by a surgical operation after which he limped till old age, compelled him to formally retire in 1966.

Since his youth, Nielsen had been interested in nature, particularly in entomology, and he became a member of the Unione Bolognese Naturalisti which stimulated his interest in Odonata. He soon became an authority on dragonflies, at that time a very much neglected field in Italy, and obtained the title of "Conservatore Onorario" of the dragonfly collection of the Entomological Institute of Bologna, through Guido Grandi, then the Director. In this capacity he took part in many scientific expeditions and attended a number of national and international congresses.

Nielsen's odonatological work, consisting of 18 articles and a book, chiefly concerned with



faunistics, also contains numerous notes on systematics and ethology. Such a wide approach characterizes his whole work and illustrates the methodology of a broad-minded student. His faunistic notes are not meagre lists of species, but are based on the analysis of all the material he could find in Museums and in the literature. By his thoroughness and his critical attitude, Cesare Nielsen set an example to his fellow workers.

The Odonata volume in the "Fauna d'Italia" (1956, Calderini, Bologna) written in cooperation with CESARE CONCI, is Dr Nielsen's most noteworthy work. Dr Nielsen in particular took care of the section on larvae. This book represents the first, and still valid, attempt at bringing together all knowledge on the Italian odonate fauna and gives details on distribution, descriptions and drawings and keys for species

identification. It is a milestone in the Italian odonatology after World War II and a valid "landmark" for everybody dealing with faunistics and systematics. No doubt this book has been very stimulating both for Italian amateurs and professional students.

Dr Nielsen described some new taxa: *Somatochlora metallica meridionalis* (1935, Boll. soc. ent. ital. 67: 59-62), the exuviae of *Orthetrum nitidinerve* (1955, Boll. Ist. Ent. Univ. Bologna 21: 197-200), *Urothemis signata aethiopica* (1957, Ann. Mus. civ. Stor. nat. Genova 69: 31-35) and *Agriocnemis sania* (1959, Riv. Biol. colon. 16: 33-40). He also gathered a collection of over a thousand species, now preserved at the Museo Civico di Storia Naturale, Milano and a rich odonatological library.

It is worth outlining Dr Nielsen's figure as a non-professional naturalist, which gives evidence of how seriousness and diligence, even if little time is available, can lead to notable scientific results. It is for this reason that Dr

Nielsen stands out among the amateurs swarm as one of the masters who have set an example of diligence and seriousness.

I met Dr Nielsen at his home in Bologna in 1977. He was then 79, and though he looked tired and weak, his mind was full of life. It seemed that speaking about dragonflies revived him, and during a few hours he continuously managed to interest the dragonfly student. He told me of his past studies, showed me nearly his whole material and presented me with a copy of his book. Indeed, a man with excellent humane qualities. Unfortunately, I never met him again.

Dr Nielsen's biography and odonatological bibliography were published by I. BUCCIARELLI in *Odonatologica* 2 (1973): 65-67.

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